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STATE FOR IO/UNP (H. BETTS), EUR/SCE (J. BLACK), AND
WHA/CEN (E. TELLO)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#) [EU](#) [PM](#)
SUBJECT: PANAMA: ASSESSMENT OF KOSOVO POSITION

REF: A. (A) PANAMA 461
[1](#)B. (B) STATE 45355

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES LUIS ARREAGA. REASON: 1.4 (D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Panamanian PermRep to the UN Ricardo Alberto Arias' decision to vote against permitting Kosovar President Sejdiu to address the UNSC on April 3 did not reflect substantive Panamanian concerns about the way ahead on Kosovo, but rather Panama's legalistic approach to procedural matters, Arias' latitude on procedural matters, and Panama's desire avoid conflict on the UNSC and to find the largest consensus possible. First VP and FM Samuel Lewis and MFA UNSC Senior Advisor Nils Castro asserted on April 4 to Ambassador and POLCOUNS respectively that they were unaware of Arias' decision to act to block Sejdiu. On April 5, MFA UNSC working-level contact Ernesto Cerrud explained to POLOFF that Panama decided against having the Kosovar President address the UNSC because Kosovo did not have "international legal status" as a state, "let alone as a UN Member State." Cerrud continued that having the UNMIK Administrator deliver Sejdiu's speech and permitting Sejdiu address UNSC Members directly in an Arria-style meeting had been an adequate compromise. From Lewis to Cerrud, Panama's MFA was startled by Embassy's quick reaction to Arias' action on what the Panamanians viewed strictly as a routine procedural matter. Going forward, Post recommends that Ambassador be instructed to demarche Lewis to lay out exactly the outcome on Kosovo for which the U.S. expects Panamanian support. After engaging Lewis, Post recommends that USUN make the same presentation to Arias. Post recommends against engaging Panamanian Ambassador to the U.S. Frederico Humbert and believes Department should hold off on Assistant Secretary-level engagement until the results of approaches to Lewis and Arias are known. End summary.

Losing the Substance, Focusing on Procedure

[1](#)2. (C) Put simply, Panama's MFA was not focused on the issue of whether Kosovar President Sejdiu should be permitted to address the UNSC. As reported reftel A, Panama is supportive of working toward the adoption of an UNSCR that supports Ahtisaari's recommendation, including international supervised independence, but also wishes to avoid a Russian veto. Post does not see any change in Panama's position. In

other words, though Panama wishes to support the U.S. position, Panama fears being isolated on one side or the other of a split UNSC. Seen in this light, Panamanian PermRep to the UN Arias' decision to deny Sejdiu the ability to address the UNSC, but to have the UNMIK Administrator deliver Sejdiu's address and allow Sejdiu speak in an Arria-style meeting, reflected Panama's desire to forestall confrontation in the UNSC and leave open the prospect for a favorable outcome that supported Ahtisaari's recommendations.

First VP and FM Samuel Lewis told Ambassador on April 4 that he believed that Arias' action was designed to give a little to the Russians on a procedural matter as a negotiating ploy; Ambassador told Lewis that Panama's action, even if on this basis, had been unhelpful.

13. (C) Lewis and MFA UNSC Senior Advisor Nils Castro were surprised by the Embassy's quick engagement on what they viewed as a strictly procedural matter in UNSC. Castro told POLCOUNS that decision on procedural matters were routinely left to Arias in New York. Both Lewis and Castro professed ignorance about Arias' action. On April 5, MFA UNSC working-level contact Ernesto Cerrud told POLOFF that, since it did not have "international legal status" as a state, "let alone a UN Member State," Kosovo did not have the standing to address the UNSC. (Note: Ambassador, POLCOUNS, and POLOFF, at their appropriate levels, underscored that the Kosovar President should be permitted to address the UNSC in the interest of fair treatment and in light of Ahtisaari's previous engagement with the Kosovar President.) Cerrud added that an adequate compromise solution to hear from all parties had been struck by allowing the UNMIK Administrator to deliver Sejdiu's address and permitting Sejdiu to address an Arria-style meeting.

The Way Ahead

14. (C) Post's quick reaction at multiple levels to Arias' action on Kosovo got Panama's attention regarding the importance, including on procedural matters, that the U.S. attaches to securing an UNSCR on Kosovo. Believing that Panama can be brought along to support the U.S. position, Post recommends that Ambassador be instructed to demarche Lewis to lay out exactly the key elements for an UNSCR on Kosovo for which the U.S. requests Panama's support. Ultimately, Lewis will be the GOP's decision-maker on this matter. Post believes that we should approach Lewis first so that he is armed for the inevitable conversation he will have with Arias. Once Lewis has been demarched, post recommends that USUN make the same presentation to Arias in New York. Post recommends against engaging Panamanian Ambassador to the U.S. Frederico Humbert. Humbert has expressed a desire to stay as far away as possible from UNSC matters. Furthermore, post believes at this stage that it is more important to impress upon Panama the need to maintain tight command and control between capital and New York before adding additional nodes, like their bilateral embassy, to their decision-making process. Once Lewis and Arias have been demarched, post and Department should assess whether Assistant Secretary-level engagement is necessary.

ARREAGA